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ABSTRACT

New Mexican tinwork is a folk art tradition that developed out of Mexican and European silver work. Due to a lack of silver in New Mexico, tin became the material of choice. Rooted in European Hispanic traditions, this contemporary craft is yet another example of the resourceful ingenuity and adaptation that characterizes many New Mexican folk arts. This lesson plan, "Making a Tin Frame," includes objectives, vocabulary terms in English and Spanish, materials, motivation, procedure, evaluation, and extensions and connections. Contains nine references and the names, addresses, and phone numbers for eight tin artists. (MM)

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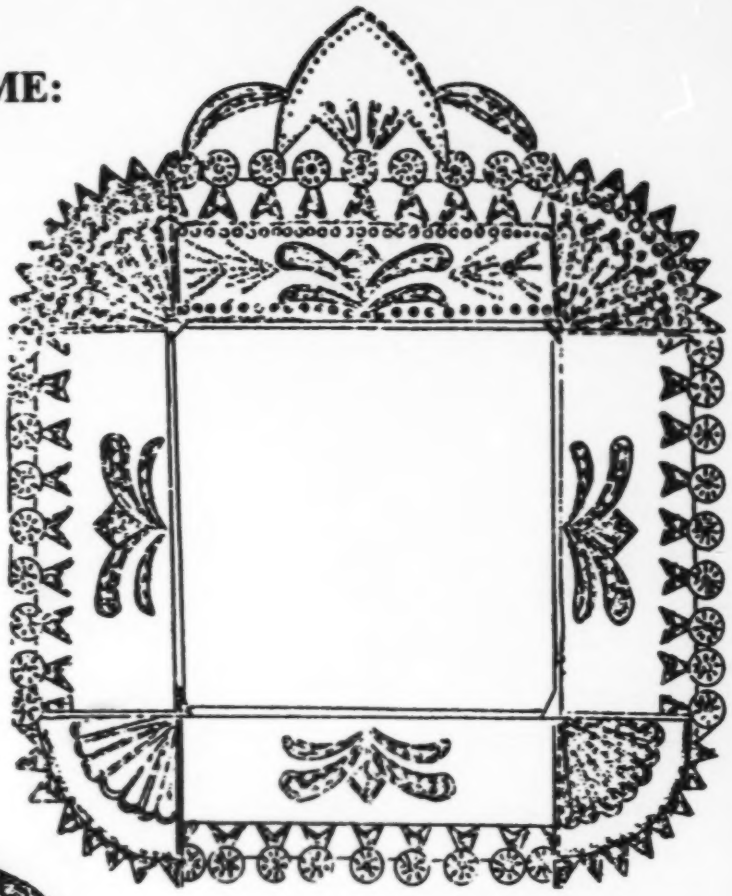
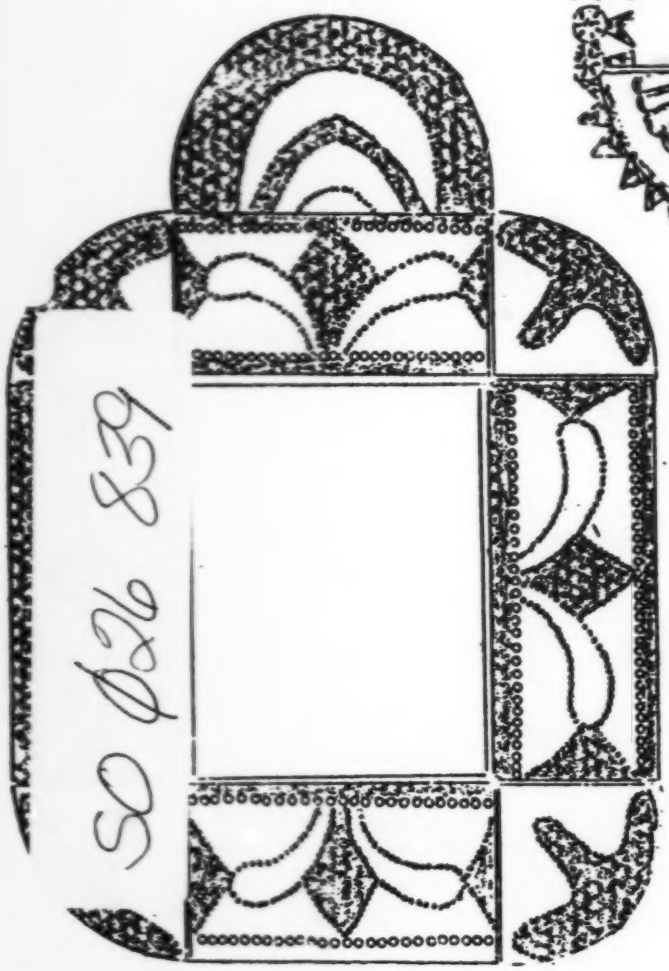
FOLK ARTS IN THE HOME:

NEW MEXICAN TINWORK





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FOLK ARTS IN THE HOME: NEW MEXICAN TINWORK

New Mexican tinwork is a folk art tradition that developed out of Mexican and European silver work. Due to a lack of silver in New Mexico, tin became the material of choice. Rooted in European Hispanic traditions, this contemporary craft is yet another example of the resourceful ingenuity and adaptation that characterizes many New Mexican folk arts.

Mined since ancient times, tin is used as a coating, as an alloy and in its pure, hardened state. Both tin and copper had been mined in Mexico before the Spanish conquest. Tinplate, thin sheets of iron coated with tin, was invented in Europe in the 17th century. Tinsheeting was produced in small quantities in Spain and sent to Mexico. Some Mexican silversmiths began to use tinplate because it was cheaper, lighter and easier to work with than silver. These Mexican silversmiths were heavily influenced by their Spanish counterparts who decorated the surfaces of the functional and ornamental objects they created with tiny stamped and embossed designs. Their work was introduced to New Mexico in a variety of forms. Priests setting up new missions in New Mexico brought tin host boxes, tin coffers, tin wine vessels, tin coated nails, tin processional crosses, tin lamps and tin crowns for statues of saints. Tin kitchen utensils, tin candle sconces and tin frames for devotional pictures and mirrors were also imported from Mexico.

Tin cans were invented at the turn of the eighteenth century out of a need to supply armed forces with reliable food in suitable containers The British perfected the manufacture of tinplating at the same time that the Santa Fe Trail opened (1821-22), paving the way for a renaissance of tinwork in New Mexico. The occupation of Santa Fe by the U.S. military in 1846 initiated a huge influx of canned goods that fueled the soldiers and provided New Mexican tinsmiths with materials.

Talleres, small family workshops, began to produce affordable decorative objects such as frames, candle sconces, *arañas*, or chandeliers, processional crosses and *nichos*, niches. Tin frames were designed to hold specific prints of saints and holy people. The tin was tooled with nails and small dies used to emboss leather. Regional styles of decoration were developed in the *talleres*. Red and green oil paint, applied directly onto the tin, was popular in Valencia County, hence the Valencia Red and Green style. In Rio Arriba, the picture frames were round or rectangular with scalloped or rounded edges. The tin, stamped with circular and u-shaped patterns and images of devotional prints or greetings cards, were displayed in the opening. Tinworkers in Mesilla Valley, southern New Mexico, made small embossed crescent shapes or "lunettes." They created reverse painting on glass by applying paint to glass and then running a comb through it to create unique designs. These painted glass pieces were incorporated into the frames and *nichos*. Stamp styles from other areas in New Mexico included deer tracks, inverted v's, diamond shapes and teardrop motifs.

In the late 1800's the railroad brought more tin and chromolithographs, inexpensive printed goods, to New Mexico, which were quickly incorporated into the tinworkers' designs. After 1890 modernization had an adverse effect on tinwork and by the turn of the century many tinsmiths were no longer working. Tinsmithing revived in the 1930's during the Great Depression when a number of private and government programs were established to teach different craft techniques. The Spanish Colonial Arts Society had been established to promote traditional Spanish colonial arts; and tinwork continued to develop beyond the boundaries of nineteenth century traditions. Tinwork continues to be produced by New Mexicans today. Contemporary craftspeople

create functional and decorative objects out of tin, mainly using tinsheeting manufactured in the United States. What started out as a necessity, using old tin cans to create useful things, has matured into a folk art form that is alive and well today.

MAKING A TIN FRAME

Objectives

1. Students will understand the development of the tinwork tradition in New Mexico as it relates to the history of the Southwest (historical and cultural understanding).

2. Students will learn about the materials and designs used to create tin frames and some of the methods employed in tin frame construction (perceiving, analyzing and responding).

3. Students will find different solutions in the process of creating a tin frame by exploring form, texture, line, design, rhythm and symmetry (creating and performing).

Vocabulario	**Vocabulary**
nicho	niche, a recess in a wall or a free-standing box in which a religious image is displayed.
hojalateros	tinworkers
taller	workshop where different crafts were produced
hojalatería	tinwork
araña	chandelier
candelabras de pared	candle sconces, holders for candles

Technical Vocabulary

tin snips	scissor like tools used for cutting tin
chisel	a metal tool with a cutting edge at the end of a blade, used for cutting, bending and shaping
hammer	a hand tool used for pounding
stamping tools	metal tools used for imprinting shapes and designs in different materials
stamping	imprinting, making an impression or indentation in a material
tinwork	objects made out of tin
lunette	semicircular or crescent-shaped design
chromolithograph	multicolored print produced by a technique that relies on the separation of oil and water

Materials

One piece of heavy aluminum metal foil, at least 6"x 8", or an aluminum pie tin or food tray for each student. Scissors, pencils, tongue depressors or other sticks for marking the "tin", cardboard 6"x 8", magazines, decorative papers, glue, masking tape, newspaper to cover tables.

Motivation

1. Show samples of tinwork from New Mexico (slides, photos, and or actual artifacts).
2. Discuss with students the history of tinwork in New Mexico; how tin got to New Mexico and what the original prototypes were.
3. Engage the students in a study of different types of design motifs used in tinwork, such as lunettes, double headed eagles and trefoils. Have them come up with their own shapes and designs to use. They can invent names for their ideas as well.
4. Ask students how they can make a frame out of the metal materials that we have.

Procedure

1. Make a frame by drawing and then cutting a shape out of the center of the aluminum. The shape can be a rectangle, oval, circle, diamond shape, triangle or another invented shape. Make sure to leave enough margin for a strong frame. Show the students different ways of cutting out the center while maintaining the integrity of the borders, such as folding and snipping, poking...

2. Use the remaining pieces of aluminum to add to the shape of the frame; these could be a series of small repeated shapes or one or two larger shapes. Cut out the different shapes and add them to the frame by using glue, cutting slits to insert the aluminum or folding the pieces onto the frame.

3. Decorate the frame further by creating embossed like designs with pencils or sticks. Put the frame on a stack of papers or magazines which will act like a cushion, then use a pencil or stick to press into the aluminum. Encourage the use of different types of lines such as squiggle lines, dotted lines, curved lines, dotted lines, curled lines etc.

4. Use the cardboard as a background for a picture or a collage to go inside the frame. The image should represent a person, symbol or idea of something that is important to the student. They can use photographs from home, magazine pictures and pieces of decorative papers to create a unique image. Cut and arrange the papers, then glue them to the cardboard.

5. Complete the frame by taping the image to the back of the aluminum using two pieces of masking tape at the top and the bottom of the cardboard. Older students will want to make supports for their frames so they can stand up. They can use extra pieces of metal and cardboard to fashion them.

Evaluation

Group the tin frames together on a bulletin board or a table and look at the different solutions to the problem of creating a frame that the students came up with. Address the issues of shape, (the different shapes they cut out of the center), line (the different types of lines they used to emboss the metal)and content (who or what they chose to put inside the frame). Have individual students present their work, saying something about the way they approached the project, how they solved a problem that they had or why they made what they did.

EXTENSIONS & CONNECTIONS

Write a story from the perspective of a tin can used in Colonial New Mexico. (Language Arts)

Imagine you were a tin worker in the early 1900's. You have your own taller. Write about how you organize your workers. How you come up with ideas for your designs? Which designs are the most popular? What is the name of your taller ? Why? (Language Arts)

Visit a local tin workshop. Interview the tinworker. Find out about him/her, his/her background and family. Ask them to explain the way they work and what they get out of it. (Social Studies)

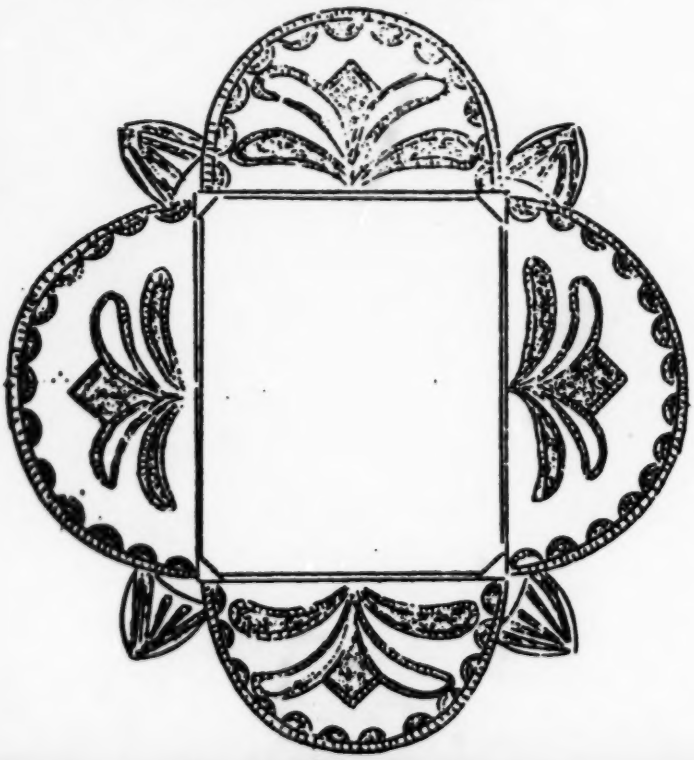
Research the history of the tin can. Present it in a report to the class. (Social Studies)

Create a recycling poll regarding different types of containers. Make a graph showing the array and amount of containers people in your classroom use; extend it to encompass the entire school if you like. (Math)

Make a giant frame out of aluminum. Have each student create a small tin shape, an animal, plant, object, geometric or human figure to add to the larger frame. Use the frame to present current work, a map or subject of study. (Art)

Find out some of the other ways tin is used and reused in the United States and the world. Create a bulletin board about the multiple approaches to tin, contrasting and comparing places, ideas and function. (Science)

Talk about what metals are available for use and reuse in our lives today. Do research reports on different types of metals, discussing their source, value, use and accessibility. (Science grades 4-6). Younger students talk about how different metals look, are they smooth, shiney, sharp...



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Juan D. Martinez
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Española, NM 87532
(505) 753-5166

G-T Stained Glass and Tin Works
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Albuquerque, NM 87194
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Michael E. Griego, Tinwork
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Santa Fe, NM 87504
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